

Washington, DC — Last night Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) voted in favor of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). This act makes a number of enhancements to the Section 8 voucher, project-based, and public housing programs, including expanding rental assistance opportunities, improving program efficiencies, and encouraging family self-sufficiency. Congressman Sestak supported the measure because it will help many families and seniors in my District and across the country. — “Since I entered office in January, I have received over a dozen requests from people who are waiting years for Section 8 vouchers to access to better housing. This bill will provide that assistance,” said the Congressman, “I believe it is vital that we do all we can to make sure housing agencies have the resources to do their job and find housing for those who need it. This measure will simplify that process and make it more accessible to a greater number of people.”

Since 1983, the Section 8 voucher program has provided assistance to low-income households to rent privately-owned housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides funds to public housing authorities (PHA), which they in turn use to administer the program by issuing vouchers to income-qualified households. These households then find units to rent and PHAs pay landlords a portion of the rent, which must be reasonable compared with similar unassisted units.

SEVRA reforms the formula used to allocate Section 8 voucher funds to housing agencies to increase the number of families receiving vouchers by eliminating inefficiencies that have resulted in \$1.4 billion in unused funds and by incentives for agencies to use funds to assist more families. The number of housing vouchers issued has declined by 150,000 since 2004. The bill protects housing agencies adversely affected by formula changes, by allowing them to use voucher reserves in the transition to maintain the number of families being assisted.

SEVRA also authorizes 20,000 incremental vouchers in each of the next five years, for a total of 100,000 new vouchers and permits. The bill includes new provisions to permit housing agencies to let families use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase, and to use vouchers for purchase of a manufactured home on leased land.

Additionally, the legislation includes a number of provisions designed to create incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. SEVRA also increases voucher opportunities for lower-income working families in rural areas, as well as makes a number of changes for the benefit of federally-assisted families, including provisions to preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas, to address

excessive voucher rent burdens, to provide for more accurate fair market rent calculations, and to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.